

TOWN MEETING COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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Town Meeting Coordinating Committee: Paul Bobrowski, Zachary Bouricius, H. Oldham Brooks, Nancy Gordon, Irving P. Rothberg (Chair), Marcie Sclove (Vice Chair), Otto Stein

Report for Special Town Meeting, November 8, 2004

The Town Meeting Coordinating Committee, addressing its charge, began meeting weekly a few weeks after its election last May. The Committee made a major effort to devise strategies for improving communication amongst Town Meeting members and the rest of the community. Toward this end, we started the experimental and voluntary e-mail service for Town Meeting members for the purpose of providing appropriate information about Town Meeting matters in a timely way. To date, 45 Town Meeting members have subscribed to the service. We encourage all Town Meeting members to sign up. The Committee has also been posting pertinent information on the Town website.

Given the unprecedented nature of a committee elected by Town Meeting itself, we have submitted for the approval of Town Meeting Article 2 on the warrant which regularizes the procedure by which Town Meeting members may be elected to the Committee as well as creates the Committee's internal structure. In effect, Article 2 defines the Committee.

The Coordinating Committee has researched methods of increasing accountability of voting. Several systems have been examined. Since the cost of any given system may be a stumbling block in financially straitened times, we are investigating outside sources of funding.

In the interest of promoting informed discussion at Town Meeting, we organized during October two different types of events. First, we arranged forums at the precinct level with trained facilitators where individual warrant articles could be explained or clarified. In addition, the Committee co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters the comprehensive Town-wide Warrant Information Meeting held at the Middle School. Judging by the evaluations returned for both events, we believe the process should be continued.

We are exploring means of assaying Amherst citizens' attitudes towards the inclusion in the Town Warrant issues that are not directly related to the business of running the Town. The Committee anticipates putting the issue before the electorate as a non-binding referendum question on the Spring election ballot.

Since the Coordinating Committee was created and elected without a budget, we also anticipate making a request for supporting funds at the Annual Town Meeting of 2005.